

23 September 1969

STAT

[Redacted]

Dear John,

For the past week I have been snapping at employees, growling at my family, and kicking stray dogs. It seems to me that all of this bad disposition may be the result of a simple misunderstanding and, therefore, for the benefit of employees, family and stray dogs I am writing this letter in an attempt to clear up the situation.

The problem has to do with the ground rules under which I will be making my presentation in Washington. There are two approaches to discussing the problem. One would be for me to try to recount what I believe to be the instructions which I have received from your organization. The second approach would be to state the ground rules which I consider to be satisfactory for such a presentation. I have chosen the latter approach because the first approach would involve my perpetrating statements which are probably (and hopefully) untrue.

As I understand it you plan presentations at several different administrative levels, the first of which would be you and your immediate supervisors. I listened carefully to the suggestions which were made relative to the content of my presentation. I will weigh these suggestions carefully, but after doing so, I reserve the right to make the presentation in the manner in which I feel the image processing work should be described. I cannot guarantee that the words like transfer function and Fourier transform will be totally absent. I can guarantee that there will be no mathematics except as may result from a specific inquiry from one of the listeners. I feel that it is essential that certain concepts be discussed and that the use of proper vocabulary is beneficial. I would not expect to introduce words without conceptual definition. I have made many such presentations and I feel that it can be done properly.

After the first presentation it is clearly your decision as to whether a second will be made. If you decide to consider the possibility of a second, then I will listen carefully to suggestions which you may offer as to changes in emphasis, deletion of material, etc. As before, I will weigh these suggestions carefully and accept those with which I agree. I cannot submit to censorship. When you make a presentation of image processing internally it represents your viewpoint on the research. When I make a presentation it must represent my viewpoint. I will not under any circumstances attempt to mislead the listeners either by choice of material shown or by statements either made or omitted. I suspect that my very strong belief in the principles which I have just outlined has played a major role in keeping me a University employee for the past 17 years.

I feel a very strong dedication to this project. I believe that image processing can be a very valuable tool for your organization. I want very much to do everything I can to make that goal become a reality. I have felt substantial frustration in recent times. As typified by the current proposal, approximately 20% of my time is authorized for expenditure on this project. There are many other projects in the Laboratory in which I am involved and I also have some administrative duties as Associate Director. The figure 20% is like one day per week. With ample support from a great staff I can accomplish a lot on this basis. But in recent times there has been tremendous distraction in terms of meaningless time charts, bar diagrams, task and subtask accounting discussions of personal competence, defense against self-appointed image processing experts, visitors, etc. If you will add up just the days of which you are aware in which my time was expended on your project in other than a research capacity and divide that number by 4 you will have the number of months of research which was not accomplished.

A contract with a small University laboratory is quite different than a contract with industry. We do not profit from high dollar volume. We profit only from our sense of accomplishment. You know our staff, John. I'll wager you can't get more earnest effort per dollar expended anywhere else. We don't have a staff of proposal writers and report writers. Our accounting system is not designed to yield breakdowns by task and subtask. Every request for a departure from our normal operating procedures represents a painful deviation of effort from the research by the principal parties involved. I can say with certainty that the successful research performed by this Laboratory during my 15 years here has been based on contracts which inherently reflect

confidence that the principal investigator has both the talent and the motive to accomplish the research objectives and that the detailed planning of that research is left to the investigator, and that the time requirements for non-research activities are minimized in order that he can maximize his research efforts. Please understand, John, that this is not some form of sour grapes complaint against the system. It is significant that your organization is the only one we deal with that has made the request for proposals of such detail.

Your organization has the difficult task of passing judgement on this research during hard financial times when you have many competing needs. As a taxpayer I am pleased to see critical examination and I will respect the decision of your organization. I also have a judgement to be passed. In addition to my very strong desire to see this work through to a successful conclusion, I must also feel that the research is nested in an environment which will allow it to blossom into maturity. If it appears that such is not the case, it will be my obligation to the Laboratory, to the staff, and to myself to recommend that the work be discontinued.

With reference to the question of early utilization of image processing techniques to practical problems, I thought it might be wise to recall that almost two years ago I made a strong plea for that cause. I have enclosed a Zerox copy of the letter to [] in case you don't have a copy in your file.

I am also enclosing a couple of copies of some notes made by [] [] In summary, the 360/50 configuration is quite adequate to the task with the exception of items which relate to interconnecting the system with external hardware. None of the items on the list would be required if input and output to the 360 was in tape or cards with scanning and display performed as an off-line operation. There must have been planning at your end on how to interface your new display with the 360, and so perhaps those problems are all solved. I think [] agrees with me that when the time comes someone familiar with the 360 should visit us and then later [] could go back to your place to help get the software operational.

Sorry for such a windy letter, but think of the toll charges I've saved!

Best regards,

[]

Associate Director

JLH:pw

Enclosures (2)